

EDUCATION vs. INDOCTRINATION

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Abstract: *In recent years the concept of indoctrination has almost become synonymous with Islam. Madrasas are described as incubators for violent extremism and as jihadist factories. They are perceived as places where Muslims are indoctrinated in an ideology of intolerance, violence and hatred against the West. The concept of indoctrination is and will be increasingly used, given the current climate of religious resurgence, religious conflicts and inter-religiously motivated terrorism. Thus, indoctrination will continue to occupy a prominent place both in media coverage and in simple everyday conversations. Therefore, we have an intellectual and moral obligation to critically examine and understand this term as precisely as possible, so we can use it accurately in relation to education and Islamic culture and in order to be able to better analyze its consequences.*

Keywords: *critical thinking, indoctrination, religious education, religious studies, freedom of thought*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is not possible for a man, to whom Allah has given the Book and the Wisdom, that he would say to the world: "Worship me instead of Allah." but rather, "Become men of God by spreading the knowledge of the divine writ, in accord with the dictates of the Book you have been teaching and studying" [1].
Qur'an (Al-Imran (3): 79)

The difference between education and indoctrination is very subtle and thus difficult to demonstrate. We will take a simplistic attempt in defining the differences between the two concepts - an absolutely necessary step for the introduction of this paper. Education involves learning and growth, it implies the difference between truth and lie, but above all, education means critical thinking with regards to the content of the received information. Indoctrination is intended to influence targets to believe in what they are told without questioning the veracity or authenticity of the conveyed information.

We can be indoctrinated by a political party, a religion or a system of beliefs. In fact, we are all indoctrinated with the convictions instilled on us while growing up. Whether those people who are close to us during our stages of development are understanding and open, or, on the contrary, if they are lonely and do not want anything to do with anyone on grounds of race, religion, or affiliations, in any event, we are subtly indoctrinated into their system of thinking. As we mature, many of us seek to develop our own values and principles through education.

Education should be directly supported by data confirming the theory. Indoctrination tends to use an inclusive language, making general, relative references about everything, or anything, as if making a statement for each individual within the group it addresses. If

such relativization cannot be supported by real data, then the step towards indoctrination has just been made.

Education emphasizes that different solutions to the same problem do exist, while indoctrination accentuates the fact that there is only one solution to the problem at hand. For example, in Nazi Germany, the only solution to all economic problems was the demise of all minorities and the extermination of Jews, as if no other alternative could have been found.

Education is impartial and helps develop one's own convictions based on the discoveries made during the learning process. Indoctrination has an agenda, a goal, and that is to determine targets to embrace the information they are exposed to.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS IN ISLAM

2.1. Historical landmarks

Since the beginning of Islam education has been of a great importance within the Muslims communities. The first word revealed by Allah to Muhammad was *Read*, so it easy to understand why the quest for knowledge is binding for Muslims.

In view of the Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions, Muslim rulers have always offered immeasurable and unconditional support to education and to the institutions by which it can be spread, facilitating children's access to knowledge from a very early age.

The mosque played a crucial role in spreading information within the Islamic culture and the association of this type of institution to education remained an unchanged characteristic throughout history, as the school became an intrinsic and indispensable extension of these places of worship. From Islam's onset, the mosque was the centre of the Muslim community - it was the place of prayer, meditation, religious instruction, political discussions and education provider - and everywhere Islam was spread, mosques were built, thus laying the foundations of religious education. Mosques took to an unprecedented scale among religious institutions, with hundreds, even thousands of students and often important libraries [2] [3] [4].

After studying the scientific literature, we find that Muslims were the first who understood the importance of education, of what can be obtained as a result of controlled dissemination of information, namely designed to reach a certain result.

The first school inside a mosque was founded in the year 653 in Medina and not even 300 years later there was no mosque without an elementary school for teaching girls and boys [5]. Children started school at the age of 5 and the first lessons consisted of learning to write the 99 names attributed to Allah and the simple verses in the Qur'an [5].

It is obvious that since the beginning of the 8th century, education, training and religious instruction were the privilege of mosques, that had become places of worship and culture; but had they really turned into centres of indoctrination?

We showed at the beginning of this paper that education involves learning and growing, but it also means critical thinking pointed at the received informational content, however when the study is done on the Holy Book of the Islamic culture, is there any room left for critical thinking? Also supported in the paper's forefront was that fact that indoctrination is intended to influence targets to believe in what they are told without questioning the veracity or authenticity of the information - but this is specific to religion in general. Is there any faith tolerant when questioning their dogma?

Worth noting is the fact that religious education started at a young age can cause for an adult to develop a submissive personality, accustomed to accepting the truth of others without reflecting upon his own feelings, thoughts or impressions.

If our basic beliefs system includes concepts such as *rationality*, *critical thinking*, *evidence*, and *autonomy*, which are understood and acquired in a certain tradition, characterized by a distinct type of education, we can undoubtedly conclude that this is not a unanimous trend.

2.2. Islamic education

Islamic education can mean any form of teaching and learning based on the principles and values of Islam. From our point of view, Islam can be seen as a cultural system in which there are various approaches to religious schooling tailored specifically for the diverse social categories that we can identify among Muslims, and this assortment of approaches is aimed at making religious instruction accessible to anyone at any level of culture. The concept of education makes us aware that we cannot and should not focus only on formal education, as it also includes a non-formal side, which refers to any educational activity organized outside of the school, and an informal side that we benefit from, in our daily experiences and interactions with the environment [6]. These three facets of education help us attain a comprehensive and complete image of how education takes place Islam, while keeping in mind that the three types education are not always clearly defined, on the contrary, they overlap.

As such, *Islamic education* is specific to any system that emphasizes the spreading of knowledge and values specific to the Muslim culture, while simultaneously trying to cultivate *along the lines of the Qur'anic scripture an Islamic ethos that dominates the curriculum in a formal and discreet manner* [7].

2.3. Islamic tradition

A very important concept closely linked to education - especially in the Islamic culture is *Muslim tradition*.

Tradition as concept contains within itself the transfer of all necessary elements for its continuance and the need for their transmission both in oral and written form. [8] Muslim tradition is a social process of constructing and transmitting the basic and fundamental values and norms by any means, and identifying the appropriate manner to achieve its specific goals and ideals.

While Islam in general can be regarded as a discursive tradition, we must also recognize the variety of practices present in this framework. For example, Shari'ah contains a variety of customs, each with its own discourse, with its own history, trajectory and its followers. The same applies to other aspects of Islam, such as traditions and customs of Jihad.

So what are the basic features of Muslim tradition? First, tradition requires the existence of a community of followers. A religious tradition is based not only on dogma but also on the social and cultural values and practices essential to the identity of its members. This explains why many Muslim immigrants choose traditional schools for their children - because they have a crucial role in the passing on and in the preservation of not only dogmatic and linguistic knowledge, but also of the cultural heritage. [9] Adhering to tradition implies that members share a common set of basic beliefs that define and are defined by this tradition, which underline its ideology – a reason for

conflict since ancient times – a good example being the way in which Jihad should be interpreted and practiced.

2.4. Terrorism and indoctrination

It is difficult to deal with the topic of education and indoctrination in the Islamic world without addressing the problem of terrorism. *Terrorist* is already a controversial concept and very difficult to define. Jessica Stern [10] sees terrorists as individuals who commit acts of violence, or threats of violence, in order to retaliate, intimidate, or to influence the masses and attract potential followers. Here we can include those who commit such atrocities on the civilian population for the sake of their religion.

The stigmatizing connotation of the word *terrorist* calls for caution using it, as Muslims, feeling ostracized, made a common front to oppose the association between the terrors spread by their fellow men and the Muslim religion. They prefer as a substitute for the word *terrorist*, the term of Salafi-jihadist in order to emphasize the doctrinal distinction of jihad.

To conclude this incursion and so as to make the transition to the next chapter, it should be noted that not all Muslims are against using the concept of *terrorism*, which they themselves employ to describe some of the militants. For example, Amrozi Nurhasyim [11], a senior member of the Islamic Congregation, said that Muslims are compelled to become terrorists: according to Shari'ah law, Allah Almighty commands believers to become terrorists and in His verse (Qur'an - Al Anfal (8): 60) says: *And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.* [12]

The terms terrorism and militancy require at least two explanations. First, while there are Muslims who engage in violent acts in order to achieve their goal - to establish an Islamic state in a country or region - there are others who share the same vision, but prefer means somewhat more peaceful, as education and political influence. Secondly, our focus on Muslims does not imply that they are the only ones able to become militants or terrorists. On the contrary, people of all faiths and ideologies are capable to commit acts of violence against their fellow men. There are many examples of Christian activists who attacked family planning clinics and gay bars.

In our opinion, it is the interpretation of religious dogma that leads to fanaticism, and this can happen between the believers of any faith.

In order to find out more on how some individuals can be programmed through means masked as education, we set in a qualitative research endeavour, meant to shed some light on the topics of education, religion and indoctrination.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology was centred on qualitative research, which we considered necessary and sufficient for the purpose of understanding the education vs. indoctrination ratio, by highlighting the important features and / or types of behaviour viewed as desirable in terms of the subjects belonging to the Muslim world.

In order to develop this study, we used as a research method the qualitative analysis of data based on self-administered semi-structured interview.

The qualitative research presented in this section was intended to identify among our respondents how education can be defined within the Islamic culture, the degree of

traditionalism and the values that it imposes - or inculcates. The interviewees were asked to detail their views on a series of questions intended to give a better understanding of the Muslims' considerations on education, thus, emphasizing the inherent vulnerabilities.

3.1. Research objectives

The qualitative research had as objectives the investigations of the following directions:

Identifying the subjects' knowledge related to formal and informal education systems, both in Muslim and Western society.

Identifying the subjects' knowledge related to the role, place and importance of education in shaping human personality.

Identifying the views on the quality and nature of the types of relationships between teachers and students.

Identifying the subjects' interest in regards to an education centred on dogma or freedom of conscience.

3.2. Hypothesis

Qualitative research hypotheses were as follows:

Most subjects have information, more or less relevant, with regard to formal and informal education systems, both within the Muslim and Western society, which they perceive as different.

Most subjects have knowledge with regard to the role, place and importance of education in shaping human personality, but they are valued in different ways.

Most subjects have opinions on the quality and nature of the types of relationships between teachers and students, which they express with emphasis on their inherent importance.

There are various educational interests of the subjects that are distributed differently on a continuum from education centred on dogma, to education centred on freedom of conscience.

3.3. Research subjects

The research focused on 17 subjects belonging to, or having genealogical connections with the Muslim world. Out of these participants there were 7 female subjects (41.18%) and 10 male subjects (58.82%). The age range was between 20 and 53 years, with a mean of age $M_v = 30.82$ years. The subjects' nationality array was diverse: Egypt (2), Indian (3), Iranian (2) Palestinian (2), Romanian (1), Romanian-Iranian (1), Romanian-Palestinian (1) Syrian (2) and stateless (2, including 1 of the "middle east" and 1 "citizen of the world"). From the perspective of the educational background 4 subjects have secondary / high school studies (23.53%), and 13 subjects have higher education / university studies (76.47%).

From religious perspective our subjects were distributed as follows: 11 Muslim (64.71%), 1 Near to Buddhism (5.88%) and 5 declared no religious affiliation (29.41%).

3.4. Research method and technique

The study is based on qualitative research method, which according to R. Mucchielli as *any empirical study in the field of humanities and social sciences has the following five characteristics: it is partially designed from a comprehensive perspective; the approach of the subject is open and ample; it includes data collection conducted using qualitative methods, i.e. methods that do not involve quantification in the collection process; it offers*

the opportunity of qualitative data analysis, where words are directly analyzed by other words, without being passed through a numeric operation and ends with a story or theory [13]. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln [14], assert, in 1994, that: *Qualitative research is the concentration of several methods, an approach involving interpretive, naturalistic of the studied subject.*

The qualitative analysis, as a particularized by M. Bîrsan, was circumscribed to various areas of epistemic interest [15], as follows: *thematic analysis*, by establishing current and important topics (e.g. the relationship between education and indoctrination); *comparative analysis*, which is a continuation of the thematic analysis through which we compared the information / data obtained from different individuals (e.g. the information collected from 17 subjects); *text content analysis*, i.e. the recorded responses with the help of the questionnaire (e.g. the answers we got to open questions, which led to the codification of certain features, or predetermined categories found in the subjects' text); *discourse/conversation/interview analysis*, allows us to ascertain the frequency of utilised words, metaphors, forms of expression etc. (e.g. the frequency of the name of Allah).

Analyzing qualitative data, and qualitative data analysis, as subjects of scientific approach, presume sequential stages meant to convince the scientific community of their inherent value and relevance - P. Iluț [16], E. Cocoradă & all. [17], S.D. Șandor [18], S. Chelcea [19].

3.5. Research Tool

For data collection we used as a research tool semi-structured interview, created by us and which consists of 21 questions, as follows: open questions - essay type answer (15), closed questions (3) and questions with multiple choices (2). Table. 1 presents the questionnaire content.

The questionnaire was uploaded on www.surveymonkey.com, and its link [20] was posted on three Facebook closed group pages: ISLAM; EDUCATION OF ISLAM; and ISLAMIC EDUCATION as of 12.03.2016. The total number of members in these three groups is of about 10.000. The respondents had the opportunity to individually access the link, while maintaining their identity anonymous.

3.6. Data presentation and interpretation

Q1. Can you remember what was your favourite subject matter in school and what drawn you to it?

[Essay]

We find that the Qur`anic teachings appear to be emergent of their lives, thus we can easily deduce that religious studies cannot be seen as a subject matter, but rather a moral duty. From our respondents' answers we can also observe that most favour socio-humanistic studies, as opposed to only two who prefer exact sciences.

Q2. Which country do you think has the best education system, and why?

[Essay]

As far as the best education system is concerned, more than half of our participants indicated UK as leading country in this field. Some of the reasons being the well-known studies of the British researchers, but also the fame of Great Britain's top ranking universities which *force the education system to be at its highest in order to maintain that exceptional level*. India and the USA have been mentioned as well, the former for seeking to enhance not only knowledge, but also values, and the latter, as the UK, for its renowned academia.

Q3. During your education, has the environment allowed for teacher - student interactivity? Are there benefits in this kind of interactive relationship? Can you, please, offer a few details?

[Essay]

Seen as a luxury, as wishful thinking, or set as a goal, teacher – student interactivity during school years was not part of the educational experience of most of our respondents.

Q4. What does education mean to you?

[Essay]

The significance of education fluctuates from just *a life guide* to *the purpose of life itself*.

As a system, it is seen as responsible for *making good human beings*, none the less, our respondents indicate that its *real sense* is the '*Evolution of Consciousness*' which involves the *ascent of Man from a lower 'animal' state to a higher divine state*.

Education can be understood through its tools: *the transfer of knowledge; book learning; just studying, or simply exercising*, but also through its effects - *social learning, building independence and self-confidence*. Consequently, we have on one side education like a build up of knowledge and information, offering *the opportunity to learn new things*, and on the other side a more holistic approach of this process, as *you educate a whole child, not just their brain*.

Another trait has been obvious from several of the respondents' points of view – namely the humanitarian, charitable, altruistic part of life which an educated person is responsible for. It is deemed as the solution *for eradication of poverty*, and it is through education that we can stop *exploitation and gender discrimination*, in addition, as educated individuals we are *able to help those who cannot help themselves*.

Last, but not least, the spiritual side of education devolves upon us since *the five Pillars of Islam* represent its *true meaning* and *the shahada* is *the most important thing you will ever teach your child and this testimony of faith should become imprinted on his heart from a young age until it becomes a natural part of him*. Shahada represents the Islamic creed according to which there is only one God, namely Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet. It is also the ISIS motto and it is represented on the terrorist organization's flag.

Education gives a sense of accomplishment as its dimensions are limitless and profound – much like us.

Q5. What didn't you like, or approve of, during your education? Some details are of great value to us!

[Essay]

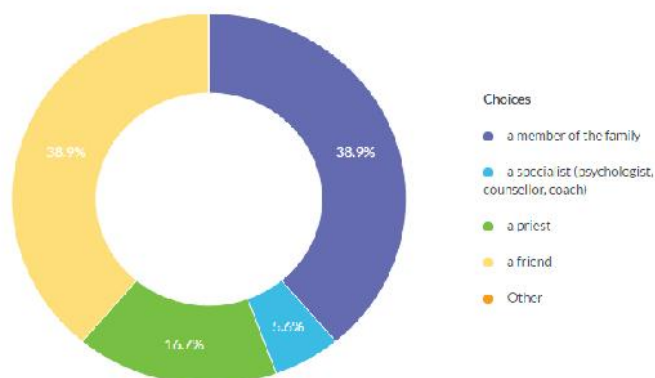
We can assert that a very displeasing factor when remembering school years is the teachers' attitude towards children - the examples varying from harsh behaviour to physical violence, but also the *contradictory and unrealistic policies, lack of budget and other resources*. We have identified an interesting opposition between an answer which incriminates *too much religion* as everything seems to be based on it, and to revolve around it, but for another respondent from the same culture the feeling that not all obey Allah appears to cause distress, as it is an aspect the respondent did not like, or approve of during their education.

Q6. Who do you turn to when you have a problem you feel like talking about?

[Multiple Choice]

As the graphic shows, answers are equally divided between our participants' option to turn to *a member of the family* – 38,9%, or to *a friend* – also 38,9% - in case they have a problem that needs discussing. A percentage of 16,7% of our respondents would rather

talk to *a priest*, and that is three times more than the proportion of the individuals who would choose *a specialist* for a therapeutic dialogue - 5,6%.



Q7. Can you please describe in a few words your educational experience?

[Essay]

The educational experiences, as described by 14 of our respondents, comprise of a wide array of assertions which can be distributed on a continuum ranging from appreciative to depreciative opinions. Some of the participants (57,14%) see their educational path as a *revelation*, a *life changing event*, as *serious business*, or as a factor which can *broaden one's horizons considerably*, a *validation* of their personal experience and knowledge. Others consider that their education was *mandatory*, had *nothing impressive*, or was *an imposed experience*. Some of the respondents had to deal with poorly addressed topics, with an educational system which lacks in modernity, or it is not "user friendly" and makes relaxation seem but a goal. 21,42% consider that education can be described as follows: *we pray, we eat, we read, we pray, we pray...*, given that *Qur'an alone is the right path*, and a right life means having *the Qur'an in our hands and Allah in our heart*. A single answer favoured private schooling, considering it a viable alternative to the current educational system.

Q8. Why is education important for you? The importance of education is the centrefold of our research idea. Your answer is very important to us! Can you please take a few minutes for this question?

[Essay]

Respondents fully appreciate the importance of education and believe it can be achieved both in a formal manner (78.57%), but also through "homeschooling" - especially for girls. Education *gives us our identity*, ensures *prosperity*, it stands for *the evolution of life*; it represents *freedom of thought* and *social integration* - in the opinion of 12 of our respondents. A percentage of 28.57% believe that education is required by the Qur'an, that *it brings people closer to Allah*, also that *the parents of the child who memorizes the Qur'an will be given a crown more luminous than the sun*, and that *it is of true value to learn, [...] the Qur'an*, which can be done at home, *especially if you are a girl*. As opposed to the vast majority of our respondents, only one participant believes that education is not important.

Q9. What do you think would be the advantages and disadvantages of the occidental educational models in your society?

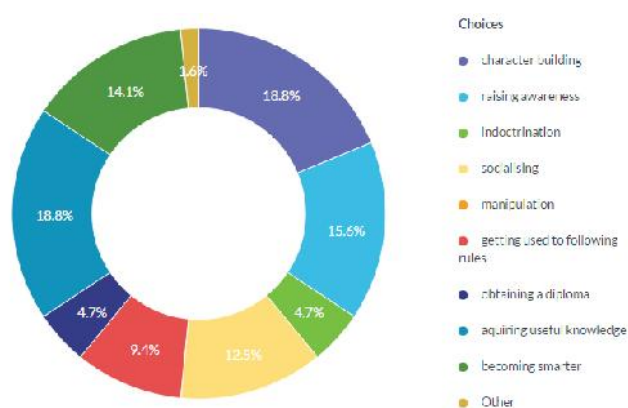
[Form]

Respondents estimate that western-style education can have its advantages and disadvantages when applied in the Muslim world. Some of these advantages, seen as such by 7 respondents, could be summarized as follows: occidental education has wider

horizons of knowledge; it emphasises the pragmatic aspects of existence; it ensures communication, easy access to information and the possibility of bringing together similar mentalities much faster; has a lot of experience in spreading information in line with the evolution of society; it develops continuously the capabilities needed to improve living standards; and it manifests a more relaxed attitude. An equal number of respondents believe that there are disadvantages as well: westerners are not loved by Allah; the deep spiritual sense of brotherhood and compassion for humanity seems to be less explored in western education; politicians pass excessive educational laws; teaching and students' evaluations are designed to test learning strategies; teaching-learning and evaluation methods are still memory based; teaching is done rigorously and students should learn as such; it lacks in discipline; the elites keep the power. Two respondents see no disadvantage, in contrast with a third one, who sees no advantage, on the contrary, there are so many disadvantages that there is no point in him listing them.

Q10. What are the main purposes of education, from your point of view?

[Multiple Choice]



On the purposes of education, the following statements were outlined: *character building* (18.8%), *acquiring useful knowledge* (18.8%), *raising awareness* (15.6%), *indoctrination* (14.1%), *socializing* (12.5%), *getting used to follow rules* (9.4%), *obtaining a diploma* (4.7%), *becoming smarter* (4.7%), *other* (1.6%).

Q11. From the standpoint of the society you come from, why is education important?

[Essay]

The question related to the importance of education for the society the respondents come from had 14 valid answers, which can be grouped as follows: acquisition of knowledge necessary for understanding the diverse aspects of life, personal development and achieving a social status which represents wealth itself (35.71%); getting a job (21.42%); a socializing and facilitating role in social mobilization for solving the world's greatest problems on freedom and world peace (14.28%); spreading the word of Allah, attending church and prayer (14.28%); training to serve the needs of others (7.14%). One respondent deems education as unimportant, especially for girls, and thinks that his society is rich enough to "buy" foreign experts.

Q12. Have you ever been part of discussion groups during your school years? Can you please detail this experience?

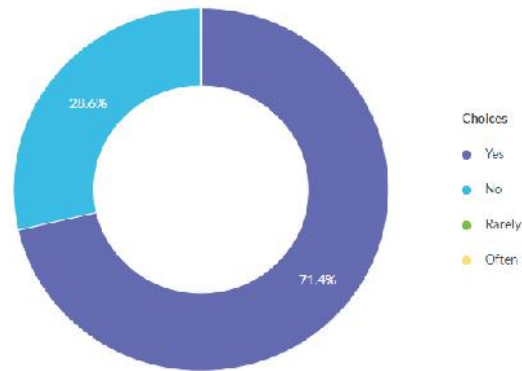
[Essay]

In regards to the freedom of expression and a number of 11 respondents (78.57%) stated that throughout their schooling they have not attended any discussion groups, constituted formally or informally. Out of the 14 respondents who answered this question, only 3 confirmed participation in discussion groups and reported that the debate themes were diverse: social, political, scientific, and cultural. It appears that these discussion

groups took place mostly during high school and university studies, usually at the initiative of students and also that this possibility was provided for by the western education systems, and not in their home countries.

Q13.&Q14. Have you ever undertaken religious courses and have these courses focused more on ethics/morals, or on dogma?

[Multiple Choice&Essay]



With a preponderance of 71.4%, our respondents stated that they have attended religious courses, and to further shape our opinion on the content of these courses we asked the participants to give us a sense of what they learnt. Accordingly, the answers show an evident similarity, as can be observed from the following examples: *we are taught that our dogma is our code of conduct, moral guide and holy principles; Islamic ethical and moral dogma; if dogma means the word of Allah, then on dogma, they focused on the Qur'an; heavily on dogma* – thus, we can conclude that, for those who undertook this type of courses, religious principles were their main focus. A forceful answer to this is the following: *Muslims claim that Jesus prayed using the Muslim prayer posture, along with all the prophets. Yet Jesus instructed his disciples to pray while standing up (mark 11:25) and King David prayed while sitting (2 Sam.7:10). So my question is: if Jesus was a Muslim, why would he instruct his disciples to pray standing up?*

Q15. Has freedom of thought been the central point of your education? Can you give us some details, please?

[Essay]

We can consider freedom of thought more as a philosophical concept than a gripping reality, and our perception on it reflects only how we perceive ourselves within the society we were raised in. *For sure our thoughts are free!* – says one participant, but *No. The Qur'an was the central point of your education*, says another. The affirmative and negative answers are equally divided, and this black or white situation is fused by a reconciliatory response: *the acquirement of information has been the central point of my education.*

A reply worth quoting is: *In India we are a secular nation and we express ourselves in the way we please. Once again please understand I come from highly educated part of the country. I have no doubt other parts don't allow for it at all.*

Q16. Did the environment you've studied in, present you with a perspective on other religions? If so, can you please sum up the essential ideas you were left with? A detailed answer would be highly appreciated!

[Essay]

For the relevance of this research paper, we considered appropriate to explore the possibility of our respondents being presented with a perspective on other religions and

the answers we received are quite noteworthy. For instance, *Muslims believe that Jesus was one of the mightiest messengers of God [...]. In fact, no Muslim is a Muslim if he or she does not believe in Jesus!* Furthermore, we find that some of them *learnt about Islam and Christianity. [...] We would discuss parts of the Bible and the Quran and common principles in all the religions.* This is an astonishing realization, as there is a common belief that Muslims actually feel at least uncomfortable, if not offended, when presented with a perspective on other faiths – *religions of the nonbelievers*, as indicated by a respondent.

We find out from one of the participants that *Pope Benedict XVI admits Christianity is fake; [...] that CHRISTIANITY IS NOT, [...] a religion of the Book (Bible) [...]. In other words: Christianity is fake / manmade* – a disheartening affirmation seeing that we could find no proof of it being true. This inclination towards “islamisation” persists in a few more responses: *On Christianity, as well as other. In essence Jesus was Muslim.*

A middle way has to exist, and we chose to present it as follows: *we do discuss other prophets [...], but Mohammed is the last one Allah has chosen*, but as another participant summarizes very well, a perspective might have discussed about *all the other prophets, not religions*. And to strengthen this claim, we use another response as explanation: *we learn about Adem - that's Adam, about Jesus who in the Qur'an is called Isa, about Moses, who is called Musa, about Dawud - David, but Muhammad is the last prophet and the text revealed to him is protected by Allah and divine.*

Q17. In your opinion, do schools encourage creativity, or just the opposite? Why do you feel the way you do?

[Essay]

Asked if schools encourage creativity, or just the opposite, respondents rather believe that creativity is badly affected.

Creativity is a type of learning process where the teacher and pupil are located in the same individual, said Arthur Koestler, but when do teachers want to be in the same place with pupils? Teachers do not encourage creativity because they can't handle it.

From our respondents' point of view schools are rather unable to encourage creativity – *but we are learners, not creators* – says one; *they should encourage thinking* - states another.

So why would schools support something we ourselves do not consider necessary? Perhaps because *we will need a variety of ideas and facilities to face the challenges to come [...]. So, creativity is natural and required, as well.*

Q18. Can education be reinvented? Does the statement "the future of education is virtual" seem plausible to you?

[Essay]

We detect a positive estimation in favour of virtual education as a plausible learning system in the future, fact which can be seen as good news from multiple perspectives. First, any sign of modernisation is a further step towards civilization. The longer a society lingers in obsolete customs, the faster it will reach its demise. Second, if we were to take into consideration the perils which many Muslim girls have to face in order to get a minimal education, we could see this as a solution. Third, we have to address the new trend apparent in the Muslim communities - that of homeschooling children. Perhaps this measure would ensure at least a guide for parents who opt for this method.

If we were to strategise, a glimpse into the future might highlight the importance of better prepared students. *We need to encourage our students to think by themselves. We need to encourage and train our students to solve real problems.*

Seen from an economical standpoint as well, virtual education *reduces variable costs and students focus on the education.*

Q19. Thinking back, do you feel your education encouraged freedom of speech?

[Form]

Although this question related to the perceived freedom of speech had the lowest number of total answers, only 12, a clear opinion is emerging – namely that the respondents' education did encourage freedom of speech. Few participants stated that the aspect has its limitations, consequently, the reasons behind this positive trend are diverse and some are worth quoting. Freedom of speech *is the whole purpose* of education. But these two key words can be interpreted not only as speaking your mind, being inquisitive and raising questions, but also as saying the right things, disseminating a certain message, like the following responses might suggest: *we are encouraged to spread our faith*; and *we are encouraged to speak the word of Allah*.

In addition, the teachers' openness to discuss different topics was likewise interpreted as freedom of speech, but one reason for which it is seen as inexistent is *conformism and because you read what the teacher says and you answer questions from what they taught you*.

Q20. How would you describe the model of education you were taught in one word?

[Essay]

Asked to describe in only one word the model of education they were taught in, and the concept our respondents chose are:



4. CONCLUSIONS

There are numerous factors (social, cultural, national identity, norms and values), which influence the development of education and the way this process and is perceived. Some states might favour totalitarianism, religious control, or just the opposite, where the educational system is concerned. It is important to understand each culture as is, given that no comparison will have kind results on neither of the sides.

Within the Islamic culture education is not felt as indoctrination, although the signs are there – if one were to look.

Starting at a very early age, as young brains absorb information with little effort, Muslims are educated to commit to memorizing the Qur'an, as it appears to have the outmost importance – not only for the child, but also for the parents.

Two major shortcomings can be discussed here: no one source of knowledge should be used exclusively without expecting a long lasting effect on the child's cognitive development; and secondly, in consequence, they are slowly taught to reject other sources of information due to the fact that they deviate from the teachings of Islam. Thus, a "us" versus "them" enclosed mind is shaped, positioning the believer in a state of enlightenment which does not allow for doubt, or for the need of wanting to know more.

Indoctrination masked as education does exist, and it is a process present in all cultures which choose to expose their people to a single worldview, set in a reverberating circuit. To doubt the veracity and authenticity of these teachings is not encouraged, nor tolerated.

The first step towards indoctrination is the deconstruction and reconstruction on one's self in order to better suit the needs of the indoctrinator – be it a group, an ideology, a political party, religious dogma, or the society itself.

Through this study we targeted different dimensions of education, of religion, and the two combined. For example, we sought to find out the degree of religious pluralism, as we consider important to always have a wide spectrum of information. Given the saying *what you do not know does not exist*, we were determined to find out if our respondents have been presented with a perspective on other religions and we can conclude that they consider themselves informed. It was clear that they have studied about *other prophets [...], but Mohammed is the last one Allah has chosen*. This inclination towards "islamisation" persists in a few more responses, but one of them has an astonishing conclusion: *in essence Jesus was Muslim*.

We can conclude that most subjects have information, more or less relevant, with regard to formal and informal education systems, both within the Muslim society and Western society, which they perceive as two worlds colliding - while occidental education has wider horizons of knowledge, westerners are not loved by Allah.

Our respondents show they have relevant information with regard to the role, place and importance of education in shaping human personality, but they are valued in different ways. As an example, *character building* and *acquiring useful knowledge* recorded the highest percentages – 37.6%, and *obtaining a diploma* and *becoming smarter* scored together barely over 9%

To successfully oppose indoctrination, schools, wherever they may be, need to become aware of the immense importance of religious pluralism, logic, reason, and autonomy. Students need to be equipped and empowered to doubt, to ask and to seriously consider both internal and external questions.

In our opinion, it is the interpretation of religious dogma that leads to fanaticism, and this can happen between the believers of any faith.

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